



The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration


Black History Month Factoids

"A Drive Through History"

Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks have all helped shape who we are as a nation. There are still many other African American pioneers who have made inroads in the area of transportation that we may not know about. As we celebrate Black History Month, let's take a drive through history that begins in 1839.

- 1) In 1839, **Edmond Berger** received a patent for the spark plug. (www.nathanieltturner.com).
- 2) In 1891, **Elijah McCoy** patented the oil drip cup. (www.nscopr.com)
- 3) In 1895, **Matthew A. Cherry** acquired a patent for the street-car fender. (nscopr.com)
- 4) In 1896, **Charles B. Brooks** received a patent for the 1st Street Sweeper Truck.
(www.nathanieltturner.com).
- 5) In 1897, **William H. Phelps** acquired a patent for an apparatus for washing vehicles.
(www.nscopr.com).
- 6) From 1913 through the year of his death in 1962, **Richard Spikes** invented the automatic car washer, automobile directional signals, automatic gearshift and transmission and the automatic safety break system. (www.blackinventor.com)
- 7) **Frederick Douglass Patterson** was the first black to manufacture cars. He built some thirty cars in Greenfield, Ohio between 1916 and 1919. (Smith, Jessie Carney, *Black Firsts*, p.49).
- 8) **Samuel Moore** was granted a patent for a vehicle headlight mechanism, the self-directing headlight and a fuel-valve lock for motor vehicles in the 1920's. (www.nscopr.com)
- 9) In 1922, **Jack Johnson** acquired a patent for a vehicle anti-theft device. (www.nscopr.com)
- 10) In 1923, **Rojo Jack** became the first black to participate in automobile racing. Jack was the only black participant in the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce-sponsored races in early 1954 and drove his 275 horsepower car to victory (Smith, Jessie Carney, *Black Firsts*, p.49).



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- 11) **Garrett A. Morgan** was granted the patent for the first automated traffic signal in the United States in 1923. (www.nscorp.com)
 - 12) In 1927, **David Baker** received a patent for interliners that prevent tire punctures (www.nathanielturner.com).
 - 13) In 1940, **James A. Parsons, Jr.** acquired a patent for corrosion-resistant ferrous alloy (www.nscopr.com).
 - 14) In 1946, the United States Supreme Court in *Morgan vs. Virginia* ruled that segregation in interstate bus travel was unconstitutional (www.liu.edu).
 - 15) In 1947, The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) created the Freedom Riders to test the 1946 U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing interstate bus segregation. The first Freedom Riders traveled through the South on buses. (www.liu.edu).
 - 16) In the early 1960's, **Richard F. Neblett** patented his formula of gasoline composition and motor fuel composition. (www.kellyken.com)
 - 17) In 1963, **Wendell Oliver Scott** was the first and only black driver to win a NASCAR Winston Cup (Smith, Jessie Carney, *Black Firsts*, p.49).
 - 18) **Albert William Johnson** was the first black to be awarded an Oldsmobile dealership franchise in 1967. He was so successful that in less than four years, he acquired a Cadillac dealership. (Smith, Jessie Carney, *Black Firsts*, p.49-50).
 - 19) In 1968, **Ralph W. Sanderson** acquired a patent for the hydraulic shock absorber (www.nscorp.com)
 - 20) In 1975, **William T. Coleman Jr.**, the first African American to serve as a clerk in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948, was appointed by President Gerald Ford to his cabinet as Secretary of Transportation (www.liu.edu).

21) In 1987, **Barbara J. Wilson** became the first black woman automobile dealer. She received the Candace Award as businesswoman of the year in 1987. Wilson is president of Ferndale Honda in Ferndale, Michigan. (Smith, Jessie Carney, *Black Firsts*, p.50).

22) In 1990, Ethiopia-born **Sheleme S. Sendaba** became the first black vice-president of Nissan Motor Corporation in the United States.

23) In 1991, **Willy (Willie) T. Ribbs** became the first black ever to qualify for the Indianapolis 500.

<http://www2.indystar.com/library/factfiles/sports/autoracing/indy500.html>

24) **Frederick McKinley Jones** received a patent for the self-starting gas engine. He also received patents for the internal combustion engine and the starter generator. (inventors.about.com; www.nathanielturner.com)

25) There are currently more than 730 streets in the United States named after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in at least 41 states. (Derek H. Alderman, Ph.D, East Carolina University).

26) Beginning in World War II, Detroit, Michigan also known as the Motor City, became one of the most important destinations for black migrants from the south because its reputation as a major center of car production promised jobs on automobile production lines for blacks. (www.autolife.umd.umich.edu)

27) More than 8 million blacks in the United States drive to work alone every day. (Based on Census 2000 at <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

28) More than 2 million blacks in the United States carpool to work every day. (Based on Census 2000 at <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

29) Rodney E. Slater became the first African American to serve as Administrator to the Federal Highway Administration and later served as only the second African American cabinet-level Secretary of Transportation. He launched and actively promoted the Garrett A. Morgan Technology and Transportation Futures Program, aimed at attracting a million youth into

transportation careers, and mentoring and tutoring them to make sure they have needed skills.

(<http://cf.alpa.org/internet/meetings/intlsymp/slater.htm>)

Thanks for joining us for a drive through history. As you travel to and from your various destinations, please remember to buckle up for every trip, every time ... You're in the Driver's Seat! For more information on the importance of safety belt usage, please log onto www.nhtsa.dot.gov.